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Byrd Opponent Ordered Placed on Leave by NEA

An independent candidate seeking to defeat the bid of Sen. Harry F. Byrd (D-Va.) for re-election has been told to take an immediate leave of absence from his \$12,000-a-year job as legislative analyst for the National Education Association.

The candidate, James W. Respass, 38, Fairfax County lawyer on the staff of the NEA's State and Federal Relations Unit, immediately called the order "grossly unfair."

The action was taken by James L. McCaskill, NEA's assistant executive secretary for State and Federal Relations, who said that he placed Respass on leave under a personnel policy that permits this whenever it is considered in

the best interests of the NEA. Respass has a right to run for any office he wishes, McCaskill said, but as a legislative analyst he has to work with members of Congress.

Respass, who announced his candidacy on July 24, said the action was "grossly unfair in view of the policies the NEA has for promoting the political activity of teachers."

The candidate said his job is that of a legal technician and does not entail contact with members of Congress.

Up to now, Respass had been campaigning at night and on weekends. He said that he had wanted to delay taking leave until September, when he would have earned enough annual leave to cover all but ten days of the campaign before the Nov. 3 election.

Respass's complaint was based on a resolution adopted this year by the NEA, stating that teachers should be guaranteed "full equality with other citizens in the exercise of their political rights . . . including such rights as voting, discussing political issues, campaigning for candidates and running for and serving in public office."